

Minutes of the IRDC meeting held on October 19, 2010

Members Present: Drs. K. Muralidhar (Chairman), N. Verma (Convener), A. Kushari (co-convenor), B. Basu, S. Banerjee, D. Philip, Utpal Das, Avinash K. Agarwal, A. Bandyopadhyay, A. Garg, Kumar Ravi Priya, Satyajit Banerjee, J. Subramaniam, Ms. Rashmi Parihar, Mr. K. S. Rao, Nitin Kaistha, Siddhartha Panda, Navpreet Singh, Dr. R.K. Sachan, DR (R&D).

1. Convener welcomed all IRDC members, including new members, to the meeting.
2. On completion of the tenure of Prof. N. Verma as the convenor-IRDC for the year 2009-10, Dr. Abhijit Kushari was nominated as the convenor-IRDC for the year 2010-11. Prof. Sandeep Verma was nominated as co-convenor-IRDC. Prof. Sandeep Verma will continue as the convenor-IRDC for the subsequent year 2011-12. All members enthusiastically welcomed the new convener and co-convenor. The service of all outgoing members was also acknowledged and placed on record.
3. The minutes of the meeting held on August 19, 2010 were confirmed, with the following amendments made in item 4 of the minutes, as per the e-mail comments received from Dr. Dharendra Katti, Warden-RA hostels:
 - a. Last sentence of 1st paragraph corrected to – “The officer-in-charge, R&D office has been requested to look into such possibility.”
 - b. 2nd last sentence of 2nd paragraph corrected to – “It was also suggested that those whowill also be given consideration on a case-to-case basis.”
 - c. 3rd paragraph - the word 'discretionary' deleted.
4. Following the comments received from Profs. Mukesh Sharma and Sandeep Verma, the minutes of the meeting held on September 14, 2010 were confirmed, with the following amendments:
 - i. CESE, IIT Kanpur was awarded the prestigious Green Globe Foundation Award (GGFA) for extraordinary contribution to making our environment a much greener place, in the category of *Best Practices in Green Design and Architecture*. Arising from research activities at CESE, 12 publications in journals and conference proceedings have emerged.
 - ii. It was suggested that reorganization of investigators in the thematic groups should be done. In addition, there should be fresh call for new themes/thrust areas.
5. DORD announced that Dr. Bikramjit Basu will be the new Warden of RA hostels and related residential accommodation. The services rendered by Dr. Dharendra Katti were highly appreciated.
6. Dr. Bikramjit Basu presented the following items in the meeting:

a. Blocking of a few rooms in VH for overseas exchange researchers:

Dr. Bikramjit Basu informed IRDC that currently, no priority is given for Indian/International researchers visiting the campus as part of the ongoing large multi-

institutional international research projects. In last few years, the number of international projects has increased and has resulted in a number of visits by foreign PhD and/or post-doctoral researchers to our campus. On many instances, VH rooms are managed on an adhoc basis and examples are cited where requests of PIs are turned down even 2-3 months before the date of visit. A general reason given for such rejection is booking related to conferences and workshops. This often causes problems in scheduling the exchange visits and planned set of experiments as the schedule of large research programs is delayed. It was mentioned during the discussion that Institute, while endorsing such project proposals, does agree to extend full institutional support to facilitate such large projects. Currently, the guest rooms in hostels or Type-V houses do not have VH-like arrangements and services. In view of logistical advantages, many PIs from other institutions, particularly from abroad, often insist that their students or post-doctoral fellows be accommodated in VH rooms.

After a long discussion on this important issue, IRDC members unanimously suggested that the Institute must give priority to VH accommodation for *exchange-visitors*. Accordingly, five rooms in VH may be reserved for the visiting researchers, with each stay lasting for up to 6-8 weeks. These rooms, like QIP rooms, should not be allotted to other guests. PIs will be advised to book such rooms at least one month in advance. For visits of more than two months, Guest rooms at RA hostel or other hostels may be arranged.

b. Civil construction works in laboratories:

Dr. Bikramjit Basu presented this agenda item before IRDC. While mentioning the background of this agenda, he cited various examples of civil construction jobs in the existing research laboratories to facilitate research of new or on-going R&D projects. Some members pointed out that currently it takes more than 6 weeks by IWD to arrive at a decision on the request of PIs for such modification. In some cases, faculty members are advised to meet with the expenses towards the civil jobs from the respective project grant of the PI. Apparently, there is also no uniform policy across the institute on this matter. This leads to significant delay in installing equipment and consequently, PIs often face problems in completing the approved projects tasks in a timely manner. The experimental research work of several postgraduate students is also severely delayed.

Following extensive discussion on this important issue, the members categorically pointed out that there is no provision of meeting such costs towards civil constructions in the research projects. In fact, the Institute (the R&D office) takes an undertaking of providing all infrastructure (civil/electric/air conditioning) facilities, while submitting the proposals by PIs to the various funding agencies, including DST, CSIR, DBT, and MHRD. Therefore, IRDC suggested that Institute should provide necessary financial approval for all such laboratory modification/construction work. Subsequently, IWD should be requested to take up such civil construction jobs on a priority basis. This step will facilitate sponsored research as well as academic research of postgraduate students. To this end, the IRDC members decided to request the Director for an approval on the subject matter.

c. Service of Bluedart/DHL and Customs clearing agencies:

While presenting this agenda item before IRDC, Dr. Bikramjit Basu mentioned that this issue (import or export of the equipment in and out of the campus) was discussed earlier in IRDC meeting. Most of the members are of the opinion that currently the service is managed in an ad hoc manner by the Stores/Import section, to the effect that very often faculty members are asked

to produce documents several times over a considerably stretched period. Significant effort is invested in following up with the Stores. In addition, the service of Bluedart/DHL or, the agencies currently hired by the Stores for the purpose, has considerably worsened. There is inordinate delay in receiving or delivering the equipments.

A few members suggested that the service of Fedex, on the other hand, is attractive as well as efficient and should be engaged by the Institute. The members also suggested that the service of Import/Export should be institutionalized through Fedex having one single-account number in order to speed up the matter and to cut down the processing time.

On a similar note, a few members pointed out that deductions towards the custom duty, freight charges, and LC opening are made from the project at different stages of the project. Sometimes, the bills are received by the PIs after closure of the project and PI has to adjust such expenses from other ongoing projects, which do not have any linkage with the respective equipment! The officer-in-charge was requested to look into the matter and try streamlining the processing of such bills. It was also suggested that the in-charge, Stores & Purchase, be invited to the IRDC meeting for clarifications and suggestions to improve upon the current services of agencies engaged in import and export.

7. **Thrust areas:** The IRDC members had extensive discussions on the agenda item, identifying a few thrust research areas, which the Institute will like to additionally support.

A number of interesting ideas and suggestions were put forward. One such idea was to identify a few projects of national importance (for example, Ganga cleaning) and explore how the Institute can contribute to implementing such projects. Another suggestion was made to identify a single project (or mission) at the Institute level, for example, creating a zero energy house or recycling and re-use of waste disposal. Alternatively, a few emerging futuristic areas on the international scenario may be identified. Another suggestion came up that theoretical research should also be encouraged and considered for financial support. Involvement of the students in the thrust projects should also be encouraged and form the basis of thrust areas.

It was felt that some more brainstorming sessions are required to crystallize the thrust areas. Dean, R&D suggested holding one of such sessions over the breakfast on one of the coming Saturdays, which all IRDC members unanimously and enthusiastically supported.

Prepared by



Nishith Verma
Convener-IRDC

Forwarded by



Dean: R&D